



LOUISIANA
SERVE
COMMISSION

OVERVIEW OF AMERICORPS



AmeriCorps is a national service program that provides opportunities for citizens to serve their country and community in local non-profit agencies. Each year participants of AmeriCorps, called Members, join a local program and provide specific, intensive community services such as tutoring students who need extra help, teaching community residents about issues directly affecting them and other services that strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps grant should be viewed as **seed-money**. The grant award spans multiple years but is renewable through an application process annually subject to performance reviews, availability of federal funds and documented progress toward sustainability.

AmeriCorps is a program funded by the U. S. Congress under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 94.006. The national public/private partnership supporting AmeriCorps is the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). CNCS receives AmeriCorps program funding from Congress and awards funding to state commissions, such as the Louisiana Serve Commission, to grant and oversee AmeriCorps programs in their state.

The Corporation and the Louisiana Serve Commission's purpose is to maximize the power of service and volunteering to improve lives in communities across the country. In the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, Congress directed the Corporation to focus national service on unmet needs that service can impact, including improving education, energy conservation, the health of all Americans, and economic opportunity for economically vulnerable individuals; increasing service by and for veterans; and providing disaster services.

AmeriCorps State and National grants will be awarded on a competitive basis to eligible organizations that identify a problem(s) and persuasively demonstrate how deploying AmeriCorps members and community volunteers will produce significant impact.

For more information about starting up an AmeriCorps program, visit www.americorps.gov.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES TARGETED WITH THIS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

In 2011, the Corporation's national service priorities for AmeriCorps State and National are applicants that address:

Education

Unmet educational needs within communities especially those that help children and youth achieve success in school and prevent them from dropping out before high school graduation.

Healthy Futures

Unmet health needs within communities including access to health care, disease prevention and health promotion initiatives, and health literacy.

Clean Energy/Environment

Unmet energy-efficiency and environmental needs within communities.

Veterans

Unmet needs of veterans, members of the Armed Forces who are on active duty, and family members of deployed military personnel and engages veterans in service.

Opportunity

Unmet needs relating to economic opportunity for economically disadvantaged individuals within communities including financial literacy, housing assistance, job training, and nutritional assistance.

TYPES OF AMERICORPS MEMBER POSITIONS

One of the major decisions to make before submitting an application for AmeriCorps funding is determining how many and what type of AmeriCorps Members for which to apply. AmeriCorps Members can serve in five different capacities depending on the program design, for example:

- (1) a full-time Member serves 1700 hours over a nine to twelve month period;

- (2) a half-time Member serves 900 hours; and
- (3) a minimum-time Member serves 300 hours.

Refer to the chart below for the other two Member categories and Member benefit details specific to each Member type. While developing a budget, costs for AmeriCorps Member positions **must be calculated on a Member Service Year (MSY) basis**. One MSY is equivalent to one full-time member. ***To determine the appropriate number of AmeriCorps Members to request, consider the amount of time that each Member will serve, the task or service the lead organization will need Members to provide, and (for operational programs) how much match funding the lead organization can provide.***

AMERICORPS MEMBER BENEFITS

Required Hours Served Per Year	MSY	Approx. Hours Per Week	Minimum Living Allowance	Health-Care Required	Child Care Assistance Available	Segal Education Award
Full-time (1700 hrs)	1.000	30-40	\$12,100	Yes	If eligible	\$5,350
Half-time (900 hrs)	0.500	15-20	N/A	No	No	\$2,675
Reduced half-time (675 hrs)	0.381	10-15	N/A	No	No	\$2,038
Quarter-time (450 hrs)	0.265	7-10	N/A	No	No	\$1,415
Minimum-time (300 hrs)	0.212	5-7	N/A	No	No	\$1,132

♦ Based on 50 weeks

AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Since AmeriCorps first began in 1994, over 400,000 citizens have served their country through AmeriCorps. Louisiana averages between 600-1000 Members each year. Being a Member in AmeriCorps is for everyone!

Requirements to become an AmeriCorps Member:

- A U.S. Citizen, U.S. National or a permanent legal resident
- Must be at least 17 years of age
- Have a High School Diploma or GED, or to be secured prior to using scholarship (this requirement can be waived for qualified persons with disabilities).
- Pass a background check
- Commit to a year-long term of service in a local program

AmeriCorps programs consistently attract students and college-bound juniors and seniors due to the scholarship benefit. Additionally, Louisiana has many retired seniors and persons with disabilities regularly serving in its AmeriCorps programs, making them some of the strongest programs in the country.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAD AGENCY

AmeriCorps programs are an investment in the community and the grant funding should be considered “seed money” for building the community’s capacity to use volunteers in addressing community problems. Agencies can utilize AmeriCorps Members to provide much needed services that otherwise would be unmet due to a lack of necessary manpower. A lead agency’s average annual cost to support a full-time AmeriCorps Member is approximately \$3,120, not including the organization’s operating expenses... or just a fraction of what the services would typically cost! Besides the savings, the programs are changing

lives by increasing the number of citizens who have an opportunity to further their education and instilling in them the desire to give back to their community for a lifetime.

A lead agency operating an AmeriCorps program is responsible for the following:

- Recruit, select, enroll, place, train and manage AmeriCorps Members.
- Reach out to individuals with disabilities and organizations that serve persons with disabilities locally, recruit persons with disabilities as AmeriCorps Members and volunteers, ensure programs are physically and programmatically accessible to persons with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodations for qualified members with disabilities.
- Report to the Louisiana Serve Commission on program progress and fiscal progress.
- Identify and hire staff to manage the program. At least a half-time coordinator/manager is required for any size program; however, if the program has 10 or more AmeriCorps Members, a full-time coordinator/manager is strongly recommended.
- Meet match requirements and be able to operate the program on a cost reimbursement basis (having 60 days worth of operating funds/capital available).
- Demonstrate broad community participation in planning how service(s) will be conducted and sustained when AmeriCorps funding ends.
- Integrate Member living allowances and FICA taxes into agency's payroll system.
- Provide worker's compensation and liability insurance for Members.
- Participate in the New Program Director Orientation and other Louisiana Serve Commission sponsored AmeriCorps Program Directors Trainings and Briefing Calls.
- Participate in statewide Member events and/or trainings.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Sustainability refers to a community continuing to meet identified needs beyond AmeriCorps with significantly reduced or no federal funding. Capacity building is the process by which a program or organization enhances its mission, strategy, skills, systems, infrastructure, and human and financial resources, thus helping the community gain greater sustainability. Sustainability is viewed along a continuum as communities incrementally reduce the percentage of AmeriCorps funding received while they simultaneously build their capacity and increase the diversity and amount of other resources identified to sustain services.

All applicants are required to detail a plan for sustainability that demonstrates how their community intends to build and improve its capacity to meet identified community needs and, at the same time, reduce the federal share for costs of services.

By establishing a sustainability plan before a grant is even awarded, communities increase their potential to continue to meet identified needs. Planning for sustainability should include documented active participation of community partners/stakeholders. Applicants will be required to describe the extent of community input in the identification of compelling community needs, program planning, and capacity building and how that will lead to sustainability.

COMPONENTS OF AN AMERICORPS PROGRAM

There are three major components to an AmeriCorps program:

- Needs and service activities
- Community strengthening
- Member development

Needs and Service Activities are the primary focus of the service provided by a Member. There are two types of needs and service activities; direct service and indirect service (capacity building).

Direct Service – services that specifically address an identified community need, such as:

- **Educational programs** - Members may provide both in-school and after-school tutoring (individual or small group) in reading, math, or LEAP preparation in low performing schools
- **Health and Human Needs programs** - Members may provide outreach and preventive health services through community clinics
- **Environmental Programs** - Members may eliminate environmental risks, especially those that affect at-risk children and youth or improve access to state parks for people with disabilities
- **Homeland Security programs** - Members may serve in partnership with local agencies like the American Red Cross to coordinate disaster preparedness efforts in high-risk communities

Indirect Service – activities that support an agency to serve more people, provide better services, or sustain existing services. Capacity building can include volunteer recruitment and management or outreach activities that increase awareness or create community partnerships.

Community Strengthening includes volunteer recruitment and management, partnership development, outreach and awareness, and other sustainability efforts.

Member development is the foundation of any AmeriCorps programs. About 90% of the grant funds awarded will go toward supporting the Members. It is important for each AmeriCorps program to

- (1) train AmeriCorps Members for their year of service and
- (2) assist them in preparing for their Life after AmeriCorps service

Training AmeriCorps Members for service includes:

- Providing Members with an orientation to the program, including information on the lead agency, overview of AmeriCorps and National Service, and Member expectations and commitment
- Providing Members with initial training to prepare them for service to their community
- Ensuring that Members are competent and have the necessary skills to perform the specific service activities of the program (i.e., tutoring, mentoring)
- Ensuring all Members receive the training in CPR/First Aid, Diversity Appreciation, Disability Awareness, Conflict Resolution, Citizenship, and Emergency Management and Life After AmeriCorps.

Training AmeriCorps Members for Life after AmeriCorps includes:

- Civic engagement activities that promote a lifelong ethic of service and volunteerism
- Leadership Development
- Goal-Setting
- Resume Writing and Career Exploration

A current listing of AmeriCorps programs may be found on the Louisiana Serve Commission website at www.volunteerlouisiana.gov.

APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Once your full application is submitted to the Louisiana Serve Commission, it will be reviewed and scored by Louisiana Serve Commission staff in teams of 3 and peer reviewers. In evaluating your application for funding, reviewers will assess your program design, organizational capability, and the program's cost-effectiveness and budget adequacy. The weights assigned to each category and, if applicable, sub-category, are listed in the chart below. Reviewers will measure your application narrative against these criteria, and weight them accordingly. Reviewer scores and comments are then presented to the AmeriCorps Committee of the Louisiana Serve Commission. LSC Program Officers will contact applicants to seek clarification, resolve questions and issues, negotiate Performance Measures, and request revised budgets as part of the pre-award review process. Failure to respond to requests for information in a timely fashion may result in the removal of applications from consideration. All final funding recommendations are made by the Louisiana Serve Commission (board). Applications selected by the Louisiana Serve Commission to compete for funding on the national level are then forwarded to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) for final review. CNCS notification for Competitive funding is anticipated by June 2010. Applicants not funded via CNCS in the competitive phase will be automatically transferred to the Formula phase of funding, and be eligible to continue in the selection process. LSC anticipates announcing the results of the FY 2010 Formula competitions by August 1, 2009. ALL funded programs (Competitive AND Formula) **must** start September 2010 or November 2010, and operate for up to twelve months.

Category	Percentage	Subcategories & Weights
Program Design	50%	Rational & Approach 10%
		Members 20%
		Community 20%
Organizational Capability	25%	No Subcategories
Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy	25%	No Subcategories